



Prime Minister

Office of Contingency  
Planning - which I hope  
will be required. Agree A?  
I think

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

I hope that when

14 July 1980

problems will

be solved before we  
dash into independence

Speed. out

Dear Michael,

14/7

Independence Gift to the New Hebrides

As you know, the New Hebrides is due to attain independence on 30 July and has applied for full membership of the Commonwealth. It is customary for these occasions to be marked by the presentation of a gift from the British Government; and, notwithstanding the present uncertainties, we need to proceed with the necessary formalities.

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The Financial Secretary to the Treasury has approved expenditure of up to £6,000 for the Government gift. We shall be consulting the Government of the New Hebrides about the form which this gift might take.

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We should be grateful if you would seek the Prime Minister's approval for the proposed presentation. Once this has been given, it is customary for an announcement to be made by means of an arranged Parliamentary Question for written reply by the Prime Minister. It is sometimes tabled by the Leader of the Opposition personally. I enclose a suggested draft question and answer, together with a background note. If the proposal is approved, we should be grateful if you could arrange for the PQ to be tabled and answered before independence. It is possible that the proposed date of 30 July will slip; and clearly tabling of the PQ must await a firm date for independence. We shall let you know when this is finally fixed.

As is customary, the House of Commons will present a gift of a parliamentary nature separately to the House of Assembly of New Hebrides. They will make the appropriate arrangements themselves.

I am sending copies of this letter without enclosures to Martin Hall (Treasury), David Edmonds (Dept of the Environment), Colin Egerton (Privy Council Office), John Stevens (PS/Leader of the House), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and to C A S S Gordon and Sir Noel Short (House of Commons).

yours ever  
Rodric Lyne

M O'D B Alexander Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON

(R M J Lyne)  
Private Secretary



WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION AND ANSWER

TO ASK THE PRIME MINISTER whether it is proposed that a gift should be presented to the Government of <sup>the</sup> New Hebrides to mark the attainment of independence on [30 July].

THE PRIME MINISTER

The House will, I feel sure, wish to send congratulations to the New Hebrides on their impending independence, along with best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the people of those Islands. Her Majesty's Government proposes to offer a suitable gift to mark the occasion.

Tuesday 29 July 1980

(Answered by the Prime Minister on 29 July)

UNSTARRED Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister,  
NO. 86 whether it is proposed that a gift should be presented to the Government of the New Hebrides to mark the attainment of independence on 30 July.

The House will, I feel sure, wish to send congratulations to the New Hebrides on their impending independence, along with best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the people of those Islands. Her Majesty's Government proposes to offer a suitable gift to mark the occasion.



## BACKGROUND NOTE

### INDEPENDENCE GIFTS TO THE NEW HEBRIDES

1. It is the practice for the British Government and for the House of Commons to present gifts to Governments and Legislatures respectively on independence, provided those countries are becoming members of the Commonwealth.
2. The Treasury have sanctioned expenditure of up to £6000 on the Government gift. The House of Commons will make the arrangements for their gift.
3. The Vanuatu authorities would be consulted about the form that the Government gift might take. The announcement about the Government gift, in the form of a written Answer to a Parliamentary Question, should be made before independence day.